

Bishop Whipple's Memorial
A Comedy in One Act.

by

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BISHOP WHIPPLE'S MEMORIAL*

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BY

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ROBERTA POWERS WINTER

PLACE

A little village in the Valley of Virginia — Bedroom in Louise's home, cheerfully and attractively furnished, resembling a small living apartment rather than a boudoir. The bed is at center-right with a table beside it at right, and a telephone on small table further down right. There is an antique chest of drawers slightly to left, and a comfortable sofa or davenport to left front.

TIME

THE PRESENT — A pleasant summer afternoon, the date of Louise's Benefit for raising funds for a memorial to the late Bishop Whipple.

CHARACTERS

Louise: Who, although a middle-aged invalid, and blind, does not allow physical infirmities to interfere with executive ability.
 Laura: A friend of Louise, several years younger than she.
 Albert: A successful Washington business man, about thirty-six years of age.
 Minna: The fourteen-year-old colored maid, indispensable in Louise's various projects.

The scene opens with Miss Louise in bed at center right. Minna kneels before the bureau at the back of stage left.

Minna: Miss Louise, dem papers ain't here.

Louise: Yes they are, Minna. You put them there after the circus.

Minna sits up on her heels, rolls her eyes and clasps her hands in retrospection:
 Lawd, dat circus!

Louise: Don't swear, Minna. The circus was a success; you know it was.

Minna: I guess we made some money for de missionaries, but you sho' near-bout ruint me and Miss Laura, makin' us be ape-mens and giraffes.

Louise: I don't see why we have to go over that again. Let by-gones be by-gones.

Minna: Naw'm. Hit wasn't no worse dan dat party you went and had for dem millionaire po' whites.

Louise: Get the paper, Minna.

Minna: Or eider dat reception fuh dat bride when me and Miss Alice hadder feed two hundred people on two hails er lettuce. (*Minna moans in memory.*) Dat was a night — you up here jes' as peaceful. An' us down dere jerkin' out de plates fo' de folks finished an' snatchin' off de lettuce and washin' it an' fixin' it on de plates agin an' sendin' it out. (*She illustrates each motion.*)

Louise: If you'd had any sense you

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NERVOUS SPEECH DISORDERS

(ideas of weakness, poverty, impending misfortune, illness).

REFLECTIVE SUGGESTION

The key to the whole situation is the idea itself. We ought then to be able to guide auto-suggestion as we please, by substituting voluntary attention for spontaneous attention. This is not easy. Emotion cannot always be present.

Voluntary effort essentially presupposes the idea of a resistance to be overcome. It comprises both action and reaction. Thus we do not think a single idea, but two conflicting ideas. Coué comes to the rescue with his law of *reversed effort*. He says: "When the will and the imagination are at war, the imagination invariably gains the day." He says further that the will must not intervene in the practice of auto-suggestion. This recommendation is absolutely essential. There should be re-education of the imagination, not of the will.

The new Nancy School does not substitute auto-suggestion for the will but superadds auto-suggestion to the will. This must not be confused with voluntary effort.

The problem is to find out how to realize the conditions wherein the desired suggestion will come into being with the minimum of effort; how to find an equivalent for voluntary attention. The use of the will is impossible. There should be *relaxation*, suspension of inhibition, and outcropping of the subconscious.

Education of the Outcropping: Collectedness.

Instead of seeking repose in *distraktion*, which rests the attention by changing its object, but continues to keep the attention employed, let us seek repose in *relaxation*, in which the attention no longer seeks to fix itself on anything. This will teach us to avoid

making any effort, and effortlessness is a habit we must acquire if we are to practice auto-suggestion. Muscles should be relaxed.

DISCUSSION

Freud's theory for the cause of stammering is one which in the light of present knowledge it may be as well to accept. We certainly cannot deny or even find a plausible substitute for it. We may have a private notion that stammering arises first followed by complexes instead of vice versa, as Freud believes. We feel that Ash is making rather vague statements when he says that stammering is dependent upon states of mind, restlessness and a badly tuned brain. Many of us may feel, especially at times, that we answer this description, and yet we do not stammer. Also the intelligence of the average stammerer might revolt especially at the "badly tuned brain." In order to satisfy our logical sense, we may insist on the presence of a sub-normal, weak nervous system, as a predisposing cause for stammering — fertile soil as it were for the complex to develop in and work on.

However this may be, it is the *cure* and not the *cause* of stammering which primarily concerns us here. Psycho-analysis is doing great good. We are hardly in a position to know whether it actually is or is not curing stammering. Authors seem to disagree on the subject. It is a fact, however, that psycho-analysis is a very special subject which must be thoroughly learned. The personality of the individual is a great factor in successful treatment, and it is believed by some that only men of medical training should be trusted in this regard.

While Ash's points are very well taken I feel that psycho-analysis is not the only way in which to attack the problem successfully.

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would have got enough lettuce. Besides, the party for the millionaires was so successful that they endowed the orphanage, and the bride subscribed to the Red Cross and joined the Ladies Aid. Don't forget that, Minna.

MINNA: All right'm. Dat's so. But me and yo' fambly, and de res' ob de town sho su'scribed to de cook-stove and de broom an' de sweat er us brows to git dem results.

LOUISE: THAT'S neither here nor there. The point is—I accomplished my purpose.

MINNA: *YOU* done 'complish?

LOUISE: Stick that kinky head of yours under that bureau until you find that paper. You think you can leave things just anywhere, because I'm blind. Well, you can't. (*Her voice has become stern with authority. Minna ducks under the bureau and scrambles around among the boxes collected there.*)

Hurry up! It's time for my orange juice.

MINNA: I got it. Dey done slip under dem newspapers. What you want me to do wid 'em?

LOUISE: Take them downstairs and give them to Miss Alice. They're to decorate with. I'll never give another Benefit. It's just like Bishop Whipple to cause a commotion—even from his grave. What does he need with a memorial? *Get the juice!*

MINNA: Yassum. Want me to take dis yere down *fust*? Ain't quite time for de juice, if dis clock tell true. Ain't but five minutes to fo'.

LOUISE: I know when it's time to drink the juice—The clock's wrong. Besides, Miss Laura may be coming over early to practice her songs! (*Minna exits right and brings back glass of orange juice. Takes impudent sip and gives rest to Louise through straw. Telephone rings as she is finishing it.*

Minna answers.)

MINNA: Hello! Dis is Minna. Yas'm.

Yas'm. Hol' de foam! Hol' it! (*To Louise*) Dat Miss Marguerite Adams. She say she wanter warn you dat Mr. Albert Smith done just come in fum Washington! He say he comin' to us party. She say she know Miss Laura ain't gonna sing 'cause she don't wanter see him. She say what you gwine do? Cause she say everybody des comin' to hear Miss Laura sing.

LOUISE: The very idea of such a thing! Tell her I haven't heard anything about Laura not singing. Everything is arranged and coming off fine. I think we are going to make more than enough to pay for the memorial.

MINNA (*telephoning*): Miss Louise say everything goin' nice. Miss Laura ain't say she ain't gwine sing. We sho' gwine be successful—Yas'm. (*To Louise*) She say no we ain't if Miss Laura don't sing; and she *betcha* Miss Laura ain't gwine sing.

LOUISE: It's none of her business if Laura doesn't.

MINNA (*in the telephone*): She say—

LOUISE: Not that! Stop it! You little devil. Don't tell her that. Tell her Laura's going to sing if I have to choke her into doing it. I'm tired of her and Albert carrying on like this; it's time they made up. Nobody even knows what they fussed about. Five years is long enough to quarrel.

MINNA: She say she goin' choke Miss Laura tell she sing. She say it time her and Mr. Albert made *up* and she gwine make arrangements 'bout gittin' it done—Yas'm. All right'm. (*To Louise*) Miss Marguerite say she bet you five hundred dollars dat Miss Laura and Mr. Albert ain't goin' make up! Or her sing, neither! She sho' is munificent.

LOUISE: That's a good use for her millions. She can help pay for the memorial. Tell her the deal is on. You can be the witness, Minna.

MINNA (*in the telephone*): Miss Louise she say she gwine call yo' han'! I'm

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gwine testify. Yas'm. G'by.— She say all right; she goin' wait an' see. I just hate Miss Marguerite; she down-right ambiguous. Like us can't have a party! (*Grumbling, she straightens and bustles about, pretending to straighten the already straight room. Laura calls "May I come up?" and enters excitedly. Minna exits, right.*)

LAURA: Oh! Louise, Albert is in town! He's coming up here! Of course you realize what that means. I can't possibly sing this afternoon.

LOUISE: I don't realize anything of the kind. You certainly have the common politeness to sing when you've promised. The very hour you're to appear you back out!—For some fool notion, at that. You know what your singing means to Bishop Whipple. Success to his memorial, that's what it means! You know how we're all counting on it! Aren't you ashamed to fail me?

LAURA: I have a *little* pride left. Do you think I'd enjoy cutting him right here with all the old cats in town looking at us and whispering about the way we're acting?

LOUISE: You don't have to cut him, Laura. If he wasn't an angel he would have knocked you down, instead of quietly leaving without a word. The idea of any sane woman breaking her engagement because the poor man didn't have the time or money to live here and go in eighty-five miles to his work every day.

LAURA: A lot you know about it. He told me I was a selfish, hard-headed—

LOUISE: And he was just right. This proves it. Here you are sacrificing Bishop Whipple and me and the memorial I've worked like a slave over just because you don't want to speak to Albert. *SELFISH!* I'll say you are!

LAURA: Louise, you are perfectly impossible. Nobody else would dare

say that to me. You wouldn't if you hadn't been safe in bed for twenty years. It's a mercy you *are* in bed. Nobody in town has any peace as it is! You've got to have your way or burst! I'll sing, of course. I've said I would and I will, if I split every vocal cord in my throat. But I'm going to disappear afterward into this room and get out down the back stairs. I will *not* see Albert Smith!

LOUISE (*calling*): Minna! Minna! (*Laura exits, right, in rage. Minna enters, left.*)

LOUISE: Come here, Minna! (*Minna goes over beside bed and stands with arms akimbo.*) Minna, am I impossible? Does everybody hate me? Tell me the truth, Minna.

MINNA: Laws, Miss Louise. Dat des Miss Laura talkin'. She mad. But she wanter see Mr. Albert all de time. *Cose* you ain't onpossible! *Cose* nobody don't hate you! What'd dis yere community do 'thout you?

LOUISE: I don't suppose I had any business telling her she was selfish. I'm selfish myself.

MINNA: *YOU* selfish? Who feeds de needy and cares for de sick and sufferin', and re-unites de famblies, an' names de chillun'? Laws, don't you worry; you's a pufiect piller uv de chu'ch, even if you ain't been in one fur twenty years.

LOUISE: All right, Minna. I'll take your word for it. Get me a piece of chewing gum out of that right-hand drawer to the desk. (*Minna obeys, helping herself to some.*) Now, Minna, you see it is up to us.

MINNA: YAS, Lawd, I speck it is. But I sho' hates to git mixed up in any mo matrimonium doin's. Member las' time—

Louise interrupts hastily—That was different, Minna! (musingly) The thing to do would be to get them together long enough—

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MINNA (*at the window*): Dare Mr. Albert now; comin' right in yere.

LOUISE: Go tell him to come up.
(*Minna obeys; goes out, left, ushering Albert in, and exits, left.*)

ALBERT: How are you, Louise? No danger of my running into Laura up here, is there?

LOUISE: I'm fine, Albert. I'm pretty busy right now, of course. How are you these days? Of course I can't see you but your voice sounds natural.

ALBERT: Oh! I'm all right, I guess. Are you sure Laura won't—

LOUISE: Well, if you are all that worried I don't see why you came at all.

ALBERT: Oh, Bishop Whipple and I were great friends. I feel duty bound to help get him a memorial.

LOUISE: That isn't exactly the way I feel about him. He made me so mad once I only hope to be forgiven after a great deal of penance in the form of church work.

ALBERT (*amused*): When was that, Louise?

LOUISE: The winter before he died. He had a marble baptismal font put in the church when I'd planned a mahogany and gold one. I could have killed him.

ALBERT (*frankly laughing, teasing*): And he wouldn't give in, eh? Well, you had a dose of your own medicine, didn't you? Good for the Bishop! So that's why you are determined for him to have a memorial. Louise, you are unique.

LOUISE: That's the reason. Oh, Albert, please do me a favor. Right at the last minute I'm left without a man to sell peanuts and popcorn. You know how the children adore the popcorn man. Minna will get the Italian costume for you; you can slip it on in the next room—

ALBERT: Oh, come, Louise; I never did anything like that in my life. I simply couldn't. Besides,—

LOUISE: Now don't shout. Any idiot

could stand up in a mustache and a red handkerchief and sell popcorn to children.

ALBERT: But Louise,—

LOUISE: If anybody says "but" to me just one more time today I'll commit suicide. With this sort of co-operation it's a wonder I ever get anything done in this town. Don't you dare make another objection. I know exactly where my pistol is! Minna can get it. Minna!

ALBERT: Oh, I give up. I'll do it, of course. But I swear I'll murder you if I have to see Laura.

LOUISE: Oh, for Heaven's sake! Why don't you and Laura stop this foolishness. Everybody in town is sick and tired of your acting like idiots.

ALBERT (*not angry, but half in earnest*): Thank you! May I suggest that not knowing all the particulars you are hardly in a position to criticise my actions?

LOUISE: I know enough to be positive that if you hadn't been a stubborn fool and she the dearest, best creature on earth you all could have been married and had a family by now!

ALBERT: Even you can't tell me anything about Laura, Louise. I know her pretty thoroughly. Frankly, I'd rather be married to you, and you'd be a handful, all right.

MINNA (*enters left*): Yas'm. What is it, Miss Louise?

LOUISE: Get that popcorn costume for Mr. Albert and show him into the back bedroom so he can put it on. Albert, when Laura starts singing you can come up the back stairs and stay till she goes.

ALBERT: Well, that's better! I'll be here. (*Exit Minna and Albert, right. Louise chews gum and schemes!*)

LOUISE: Minna!

MINNA enters, right. Yas'm.

LOUISE: Come here, Minna. Where have they got the peanut and popcorn stand?

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MINNA (*at the window*): Right in front,
at de side po'ch.

LOUISE: Well, tell them to move it
around under the south window so
Albert can't be seen from the music
room.

MINNA (*leaning out the window, right*):
Miss Alice, Miss Louise say make 'em
carry dat ar stand around back under
dat apple tree, whar it look more
natchel like.— They done it.

LOUISE: Now, call up Miss Laura—
13 J— (*Minna goes to telephone*) and
tell her the coast is clear. The people
are all here. Tell her to come on and
sing.

MINNA (*in telephone*): 13 J— Hello—
Dis Miss Laura? Miss Louise done
sent Mr. Albert out back so you can
come on right quick and git dat singin'
done. We waitin' for yuh. Yas'm.
Goodbye.

LOUISE: Now, Minna, tell me how
everything looks. Who's down there?

MINNA (*at the window, back*): De whole
town done gathered on us premises.
Can't fool 'em when Miss Laura goin'
sing. Yonder dat 'Piscopal preacher
in dem little boy pants er his'n.

LOUISE: Knickers, Minna. Has Albert
gone down?

MINNA (*going to window, right*): Yas'm,
and everybody buyin' peanuts and
popcorn. Look like dey wonderin'
who dat *Italian* is. Miss Louise!
Miss Alice done got a new hat. It's
des outlandish, too — got a whole
vegetable garden on hit.

LOUISE: What dress has she got on,
Minna?

MINNA (*crossing to window, left*): Dis
ain't no time for speechifyin', Miss
Louise. I c'n tell you 'bout de folks
later. Heah come Miss Laura. I
spec dat Italian is makin' tracks fur
us apartments. (*Exits, left*.)

(*Albert enters hurriedly, right, swearing
under his breath. He has on a bright
blue smock over his suit, a bandana*

*handkerchief tied around his head, and
a bristling black mustache.*

LOUISE: Is that you, Albert? Minna
says everything is going fine. Have
you taken in much money?

ALBERT: Yes. Thank goodness nobody
recognizes me, either. Louise, I'll
never forgive you for this. (*Laura is
heard singing*.)

LOUISE: Laura has a beautiful voice,
hasn't she? Albert, come over to the
window and see if they're selling much
at the art counter.— Well, have you
gone to sleep?

ALBERT starts from rapt listening to
Laura: Oh! er— They've sold just
about everything. Louise, who is
that terribly old man down there?

LOUISE: That must be Mr. Jones. He
preached out at the "Old Chapel" for
sixty years and I decided to bring
him in here and take care of him. I
gave a silver tea and made enough to
support him for a year.

ALBERT: I wonder if people don't get
tired of these benefits of yours? It's
a case of "can't help it," I guess, when
you are always the one to give them.

LOUISE: Oh, they don't mind. It gives
them something to fuss about. Albert,
are Mr. and Mrs. White down
there?

ALBERT: Yes, together. I meant to ask
you when they decided to get married
again. I thought that divorce was
certainly final.

LOUISE: Oh, I told them it was wicked
to be so selfish when their boys needed
the atmosphere of a home so much.
It was hard work, but I managed to
get them married again. The cere-
mony was performed right under that
light, there.

ALBERT: Of all the—

(*Laura enters breathless. Nods indiffer-
ently to Italian, who, horrified, doesn't
know where to turn.*)

LAURA: Well, Louise, I've sung; I hope
you are satisfied. I've sung until I'm
blue in the face.

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LOUISE: Laura, I don't believe you've met Signor Albretti—my popcorn man—have you?

LAURA (*sweetest tone*): Oh, Signor—I had an idea that was make-up and costume. I see you are genuine. We appreciate your help, I'm sure.

ALBERT: Pleeceda to meeta—No speeka de English—

LAURA (*graciousness itself*): I suppose you haven't been over long. The language is difficult. Shall we continue our conversation in the future?

ALBERT: T'anks; t'anks. Maka me veree hap. (*Trouble with his mustache, turns hastily to window, right.*)

LOUISE: Perhaps that would be better if you're in a hurry, Laura.

LAURA: I certainly am in a hurry. Where's that creature, Louise. I haven't seen him but I know he's here. I don't want to run up on him at the last moment, now.

LOUISE: Why, Laura, didn't you know? This is Albert—Signor Albretti. You didn't recognize him. Isn't that absurd. I thought you had forgiven—(*Glares of horror pass between Albert and Laura.*) I was just telling Albert, Laura, that the Benefit would have been a complete failure unless you two had so unselfishly consented to do what I asked you to. Now I know you all will want to go see everybody, so don't mind me. You'd better use the front stairs. The back steps are wet with paint.

LAURA (*fiercely*): Paint!

ALBERT: Paint!

(Both dash for the door to back stairs, then each waits for the other. Finally go out front door together in helpless fury. Presently noise of falling down steps.)

LOUISE: Minna!

(Minna enters, left, in frenzy of excitement.)

MINNA: Miss Laura done fell down de front steps and busted herself subconscious. Mr. Albert jes stand dere and look at her!

LOUISE: Tell him to bring her in here.

(*Calling*): Albert, bring her in here and put her on the couch. (Minna exits and enters in quick succession.)

MINNA: He done come outa his trance but he ain't payin' no 'tention to us. He too busy a-pattin', and a-revivin' her and a-moanin' "Oh, my Darlin', my Darlin' . . . It was all my fault. Oh, she daid; she daid!"

LOUISE: Take him my smelling salts off the dresser. Tell him to bring her in here, Minna, so people won't see them. Hurry.

MINNA (*obeying*): Laws, Miss Louise, she ain't daid, but she done got a gran' crack on de haid. I do trus' her and her beau gwine come out victorious.

(Albert and Laura enter still wary of each other, she slightly dazed, rubbing head, limping; he with a solicitousness which he tries to make impersonal.)

ALBERT: Suppose you lie down, Laura.

LOUISE: Minna, you run down and get a bottle of that blackberry wine out of the closet under the stairs. Quick!

ALBERT: I'm going to call the doctor. (Placing Laura on the couch, he goes to telephone.)

LAURA: No—Oh, no, thank you. It isn't necessary, really. I'm quite all right. (Gets up and goes to stop him.)

ALBERT: But I'm going to; I insist.

(She sways as he picks up the 'phone and he rushes to her. She falls limply across his arm and he looks at her helplessly and awkwardly, in frenzy of anxiety.) My H e a v e n! She has fainted. What must I do with her, Louise?

LOUISE: If you don't know I'm sure I can't tell you.

ALBERT: My Precious, what can I do? Where does it hurt? (Puts her on the couch.) Louise, do you think she is dying? Oh, why doesn't somebody do something? Some water—anything. Oh, thank goodness? (Laura comes to and begins to cry.) What is it, Darling. Don't cry; you break

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my heart. What's the matter with her, Louise?

LAURA: Oh, I'm all right. But suppose I'd been killed—and I've been so selfish and mean. Oh, I can't stand it. Do you still love me, Albert?

ALBERT: Better than anything in the world. Why, I adore you. When I think what a brute I've been I could kill myself. You beautiful, adorable angel. Can you ever forgive me? I'll do *anything*.

LAURA: Don't, Dearest. You make me so ashamed. It was I who was awful and silly—

LOUISE: Now listen to that. And if it hadn't been for me you would never have spoken to each other again.

LAURA: Oh, no, Louise; you are mistaken. I had fully determined to beg Albert's pardon for being such a little fool. He knows I've always loved him—

ALBERT: Just as I have always known that some day I'd have the courage and the manhood to tell Laura how sorry I am to have been such a cur! That's what I left Washington for yesterday. Will you forgive me, Dear Heart?

(*Minna, plainly under the influence of blackberry wine, appears in the door, stops short at sight of the lovers!*)

MINNA: Miss Louise, I can't find dat— Oh, Lawd!

LOUISE: Don't swear, Minna. But I agree with you!

MINNA: I'se jes gwine say, Miss Louise, dat ef you wants dat blackberry wine, hit done *all* spoilt.

LOUISE: Minna, did you hear those idiots say I didn't have anything to do with bringing them together?

MINNA: Yas'm. But you jes let 'em have deir way in dis small matter, cause you done had yourn in de big one! I ain't takin' back what I done said about you bein' a piller— But you sure is fractious at times!

LOUISE: Have they counted the money, Albert? (*Albert, too occupied to answer, Louise turns to Minna*): Have they counted the money, Minna?

MINNA: No'm, dey ain't.

LOUISE: Well, you phone Miss Marguerite, Minna— And what did you say about that blackberry wine?

MINNA (*in a great hurry to avoid answering*): Hello! Hello! Hello! 20 X— Dis Miss Marguerite? Yas'm, dis Minna. Miss Louise say— You kin jes mail us dat check fuh dat \$500.00, cause Miss Laura sure did sing— Noble! Yas'm— Yas'm— Dey is. Dey settin' right here right now. Yas'm. Dey done had dey ups an' downs, but dey "up" now! Good-bye.



